

EXPLORING THE CONTEXTUAL FACTORS RELATED TO TRANSFER OF LEARNING IN A HIGH SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EMINTS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Truly impacting teacher practices is a challenge for educational professional development (PD) providers. Typically, little attention is paid to the factors within the environment to which the educators return and how those factors will impact participants' ability to integrate what they have learned into their teaching practices. Even for successful PD programs like the eMINTS (enhancing Missouri's Instructional Networked Teaching Strategies) Program, more information about the relationship between transfer and school contextual factors can prove useful.

This study used a single case study design, with primarily qualitative methods, to explore the relationship between transfer of learning and the contextual factors in a high school implementation of the eMINTS Program. The primary goal of the eMINTS PD Program is to have teachers integrate technology and student-centered, inquiry-based instructional strategies into their classroom practices. Data collection methods included an online questionnaire, in-depth participant interviews, classroom observations, and document and artifact analysis. The findings suggest that a wide variety of contextual factors were indeed related positively and negatively to teacher transfer of learning at the high school level. A variety of barriers were identified such as structural and curriculum constraints, technology challenges, and varying degrees of teacher comfort with the more student-centered instructional strategies. However, in this particular case, the factors which helped facilitate teachers' use of the eMINTS instructional strategies appeared to significantly outweigh the barriers; the primary enhancers included exceptional leadership, a highly collaborative work culture, and strong technology support.